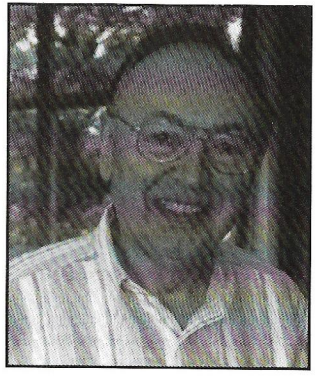
CONDUCTED BY PETE MOFFETT

Bossaers earns MMR

Fons Bossaers was born in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on June 3rd, 1927. Like most model railroaders he got his first tinplate train presented by Saint Nicholas, the Dutch equivalent of Santa Claus. Although, this was not a Lionel or American Flyer trainset, but a Marklin "O" scale with an electric 0-4-0 locomotive. Those evenings would soon be replaced by so many tinplate sectional tracks presented, that the entire living room floor could be filled with rails. Even an electric turnout was available. It was situated at the far end of the room so that with a push of a button the train could be directed to another spur without running to it to change the direction.

During WW II there wasn't a lot of model railroad equipment available in The Netherlands for Fons to expand the train collection. After that, military service took over life. His interest changed also—mini skirts, blue eyes and other female attractions were more important than playing with trains.

The model rail bug bit again in 1956, when Fons met an old school friend who shared his model railroad hobby. Soon after, he bought his first kits and, while buying always goes faster than building a layout, the collection grew steadily. Most of the models were of European prototypes—Dutch, German, Italian and French models shared the closet shelves. All of them were two-rail DC system. After a move to Schiedam, close to Rotterdam, his first layout was finally erected. It was a simple 4x8 layout but before it was even finished he met some modelers who had American trains by Rivarossi and Tyco. Some even had brass models by Akane and Tenshodo. This was something totally different! Soon he acquired a Rivarossi 0-8-0 in his collection, followed by much more.



On April 13, 1969, the Contactgroep NMRA Netherland was founded. Among those men gathered in Central Station in Amsterdam, one could find Fons. Two years later, in May 1971, he became a member of the NMRA, too—and has remained a member ever since. According to Fons, "The NMRA is the only organization around the world that has done the most for this fine hobby. I underline this goal and I will support this as long as I can."

After joining the NMRA, Fons sold his entire European collection and concentrated on American prototype's. After his daughter left home to study at the Amsterdam University, her room became vacant and a new layout was erected, but this time it was a New England inspired American layout. Contacts with penpals in the USA, specifically John Baxter from Warwick, RI, led to an affection for the former New York, New Haven & Hartford R.R.

Begining in the late '80s Fon's was editor of the club magazine Model Spoorwegen (Model Railroads in English) for seven years and he received a Presidential Award for this job at the National Convention in Eugene, OR in 1987.

Fons earned AP Certificates (in chronological order) for Model Railroad Author, Association Volunteer, Master Builder Motive Power, Cars and Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer Electrical and Chief Dispatcher. The last one was earned for his work for FREMO, FRiendscircle of European MOdel railroaders, a western European wide organization with members in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, France, Switzerland and Austria. Fons became a member in 1991. There's also an American branch in FREMO, which follows the NMRA Standards and RP's. Specifically for the meetings held in The Netherlands, Fons was active in the arrangement of several modular layouts, making the time tables and dispatching the train movements.

Fon's hoping to stay active in the hobby for years to come and has a warm spot in his heart for the NMRA.